The Origin of Neo-Soul Music

Music that can be considered intense and filled with elements of Rhythm, Jazz and blues combined with bold vocals with the ability to touch are souls is a partial way of describing what Soul Music has been able to do for people. Soul music has no doubt made a major mark in history. Many genres have been able to take parts of it and create masterpieces that would be considered classics. One genre in particular that has been able to benefit from the unmatchable sounds of soul music is Neo-Soul. But what is Neo-Soul music and how did originate? How did Neo- Soul standout from other soul music? What are people views of Neo- Soul music?

What is Neo-Soul Music and how did originate? Neo-Soul music is a genre that blends contemporary R&B and 1970s-style soul with parts of hip-hop music mixed in. Neo itself means "New" and the word Soul is timeless. (698 David .M) Neo soul originated in the 1980s and early 1990s and it was able to reach mainstream success during the 90's. Neo-Soul term however, actually had been used as early as 1987 according to "There's Nothing Really New under the Sun": The Fallacy of the Neo-Soul Genre (242 Cunningham) It's said that Kedar Massenburg of Motown Records in the late-1990's trade marked the term New-Soul music with the help of musical artists like Raphael Saadiq's of the band Tony! Toni! Tone! with debut album of ("Brown Sugar" 1995 debut album by singer D'Angelo) Mint Condition and more. Kedar describe Neo- Soul music as a "style of music that emerged from soul and contemporary R&B". (242- 243 Cunningham) Neo-soul music is heavily based on soul music of its past it has been identified as tradition of late-century American soul music (699 David. M) However, it's said that, neo-soul is just soul music that both reflects and advances the tradition. (241 Cunningham) Neo- Soul music came from soul as well as contemporary R&B music. In neo-soul music you can hear elements of both music influences on this genre of music. The sound is generally

focused on how the artist is choosing to express himself rather than their popular appeal. Neo-soul music owes a debt to R&B artist and jazz artist who came before them. R&B artist have been able to sample soul music sound and create them own flavor. The name Neo- Soul itself implies or lead us to believe that it is necessary sound for today soul music. Neo- Soul music embraces musical ideas that originated with soul music and a bit of R&B mixed with Rock music. Neo-Soul music uses these original sounds classic soul music with the combination of instruments to create its sound. Some of the instruments that are used in Neo-Soul music is a guitar, bass, electric, piano, organ, drums, singing, rapping, horns, and drums. (1 Farley) Neo-soul is a lot of live instrumentation and songs with lyrics that are obviously talking about something," notes David McPherson (1 Mitchell, Gail) But what made Neo-Soul standout? How was it a different sound from your standard R&B soul music?

Neo-Soul music is a more custom sound and innovative of R&B music. It incorporates jazz, funk, hip hop and electronic to pop, fusion and African music. The music of Neo-Soul is written with the artist writing songs or singing songs keeping in mind with what is going on around them. Whether that is their surroundings around the world or around their personal life. The music has a goal to send a conscious message to their listeners and that is not the case with all music today which makes it different. Also, unlike many other soul music Neo- Soul music has a strong female presence not just making music, but also their some that have made incredible impacts in music itself. In the article" Neo-Soul on A Roll" it mentions that "Neo-soul artists tend to create music that's a good deal more real, a good deal more edgy than the packaged pop of, say, teen-oriented groups like the Spice Girls and Cleopatra. They tend to write lyrics that are more oblique and yet more socially and emotionally relevant than those of gangster rappers. "(28 Farley) The music of Neo-Soul also stands out to because it' easy to listen to. Although many

soul songs are great songs sometimes, they came be complicated too different listeners. They may at times have deeper meanings that require listening to repeatedly to make sure, we had a clear understanding. The music also has an attitude contemporary and sensible way of sound, many find that it resonated with their life and the things that were happening today a modern form of soul music. Neo-Soul music has a less conventional sound than your standard R&B music. That makes it standout from R&B music which many find different and refreshing because it gave R&B fans a different version of R&B that is incorporated into different sounds that are not traditionally used. Neo-Soul music's stands out as well because unlike R&B music it's much more soulful, and it also sends the listener a greater message and meaning to R&B music. Unlike R&B music Neo-soul music is also strictly designed to focus on playing in R&B stations and shows.

Neo-Soul music artists explores classic soul music and humanizes R&B, which helps to help it standout as a perfect product of sound. That reason allows Neo-Soul music to be able to play just the way it is, with no adjustments needing to be made. At times Neo-Soul artists blend in other genres such as hip hop. The combination of Hip Hop and R&B is soulful and smooth which has allowed it to be heard in different ways from Americans to international artist. Unlike R&B music Neo-Soul music artists at times often have a different kind of lifestyles and fashion including things such as incense, organic food and knit caps.

Neo-Soul also can blend in well with other genres. Unlike R&B Neo-Soul try bringing awareness to political issues such as race and class which is often ignored by pop, R&B and bring in a personal approach to love of people and politics. So present was this sound, already a hybrid blend of blues, swing, and gospel forms, that for many "soul babies," this music continues to represent the definitive link to authentic, organic blackness, and also provides the aural link to

the social movements that characterized the Civil Rights era. Experientially, soul music serves, as Gilroy notes, "as the primary means to explore critically and reproduce politically the necessary ethnic essence of blackness" (699 M. David) “As a result, neo-soul artists continually turn back to old sounds and old themes. They figuratively dust off their parents' 45s as well as the political and social values that characterized the late Civil Rights moment." (699 M. David) Neo-Soul music audience tends to be underground and prefer soul like music than music that is more mainstream than popular sounds. Neo-Soul music differences with R&B may be apparent but no doubt many of its artist have been able to benefit from both styles. But how do people feel about Neo-Soul music once it was established? Also how do people feel about it now?

Neo-Soul music has impacted many different artists and people differently. It has been said that neo-soul music vocals, have an overarching theme of desire, and groove to spare, soul music from the 1960s and 1970s imprinted its listeners, especially the young, with a craving for a well-timed wail or a properly executed tambourine tap. (698 M. David) Many musicians in the genre, dislike the term Neo-Soul and have disassociated themselves from it, calling it nothing more than shallow marketing tool. (699 M David) Some artist ignores the label because they don’t like it. They believe it gives people the notion that soul music has ended at some point in time. On the other hand, many artists have been able to go mainstream because of artists like Lauryn Hill who had a was successful album Miseducation of Lauryn Hill in 1998. On the other hand, many people feel that its declined came in the 2000’s because many of the artist failed to make it at commercial impact after previous successes or not releasing a follow up album. The result many feels is that Neo-Soul music is still there, but it’s been underground and it’s trying to get the attention of the mainstream again.

The article “There’s Nothing Really New under the Sun”: The Fallacy of the Neo-Soul Genre” says that “neo-soul is indiscriminately applied to numerous artists are only one of the genre’s many problems. “What makes the term so problematic is the popular belief that it is a new form of R&B/soul rather than a continuance of it. However, as I contend here, neo-soul is just soul music that both reflects and advances the tradition,” (252 Cunningham) In article it also mentions among Neo-Soul artist there are the two credited with the sound itself—D’Angelo and Erykah Badu. D’Angelo is somewhat unresponsive about the term: “I was listening to other artists that were influencing me to go in that direction, like Tony! Toni! Tone! and Raphael Sadiq [sic]. I don’t even know who came up with the term” (Farber). Unlike D’Angelo, however, Badu registers an awareness of Massenburg’s creation of neo-soul as she struggles to come to terms with its meaning: “What’s funny about neo-soul is that I don’t even know what it means... I know what the two words mean, but that term was thrust upon me by Kedar Massenburg, who is the president of the label that signed me” (243 Cunningham).

The article goes on to mentions that Miki Turner notes, “Badu is seen holding up a sign declaring neo-soul dead on the sleeve of her last album cover.” The idea that neo-soul is dead has become a popular theme lately because of the majority response from music artist responses. In the article There’s Nothing Really Under the Sun ‘the Fallacy of the Neo Soul Genre” it mentions the person leading this charge that neo- soul is dead interview: Jaguar Wright, whose album Divorcing Neo. 2 Marry Soul (2005) officially signaled her desire to break free from the term. In a Vibe interview conducted after the album’s release, Wright is rather explicit—she is well-known for her candor—about her rejection of the term: Yeah, I was definitely pegged neo-soul. I disagreed with it as time went on and as the whole neo-soul brand got bigger. I started reading articles that would say, “neo-soul artist Faith Evans”, or, “Usher”— Faith and Usher are

pop singers! My friend Res was labeled neo-soul and she's alternative rock. So, I said, okay, this is the new nigger music! They found a way to just group us all together. Then I said, there's no way to identify this thing and it's strictly a marketing tool. Marketing is very important in the corporate world, but it still isn't the basis for art. The truth is that I'm just a soul singer. (243-244 Cunningham)

Nevertheless, neo-soul music and identity self-consciously draw on influences from the stereotypically nonblack camps of rock, electronica, and folk music. (699 David M)"However, a lot of people don't like the term," he continues, "because they don't want this music to be looked at as a genre. Because, when you classify music, it becomes a fad, which tends to go away. But soul music is soul music. But even with the things that people don't like about Neo-Soul there are still those who have a different opinion. In the in the article "There's Nothing Really New under the Sun": The Fallacy of the Neo-Soul Genre" says that there are those who do accept the neo-soul designation. For example, Angie Stone refers to herself as a "neo-soul diva" ("Angie Stone Talks 'Love & War'").4 Raheem DeVaughn classifies himself as a "neo soul rock star hippie" ("Toyota Concert Series"). (244 Cunningham)

In one article neo-soul is the best name to call the latest emerging genre. (Farley 83) Also, there was comments made by Jerome Hipps and Mike McArthur, who comprise the management/production duo Mama's Boys (Musiq, Aaries), echo Massenburg's sentiments. "What's new about soul music?" asks Hipps. "This is just a new generation of artists who are carrying on the soul-music tradition." Adds McArthur, "We just call it soul music. We don't really see it as a new-soul thing. It's something that's been here and will always be here. The only thing new is the artists making the music." (1 Mitchell, Gail) David McPherson, executive VP and urban music at Epic Records shared his view on neo soul music when he said" Genre labels

facilitate increasing market consumption of stratified music types and financially support music corporations, radio conglomerates, and consumers that look for packaged products targeted to specific demographics. "(1 Mitchell Gail) He also said in another article that "They're conscious-driven songs, not just about shaking your booty or just talking about sex but about events going on around you or about relationships. When you saw Jill Scott organically sell 2 million albums and multiracial audiences at shows appreciating her songs, that did a lot for this music. Then Alicia Keys picked up the torch. “I’ve never had a problem with the term neo-soul. It was created for artists whose music takes one back to '70s music," McPherson continues. "Neo-soul is mainstream, thanks to Jill, Alicia and others. I think it's here to stay-but, like any genre-when something becomes saturated, when what once was underground becomes mainstream, people tend to want something new. But this music isn't going anywhere. It's quality music, catalog music."(1 Mitchell, Gail)

The belief is that for some Neo-soul is not dead. In fact, it is thriving, but precisely because black artists such as Badu work to liberate themselves from genre labels, assert their individual subjectivities, and complicate what it means to be black and to make black music. (698 M. David) Although Badu may not agree or understand why she was labeled neo-soul. She has opened the door to many who fit into that sound, that’s why she is comely referred to as queen of neo-soul. In the process, neo-soul artists sometimes are judged for being "hyper soul," characterized by half sung, half rapped vocal performances, glorifies materialism and "playa culture". “Neo-soul resists this dogmatic evocation of debased street credibility that permeates much of contemporary popular R&B tracks. Instead, neo-soul singles typically reference "da hood" through nostalgic visions of black love, familial unity, and community. (699 M. David) Neo-soul artists speak of figurative, and often literal, return to their roots. (699 M. David)

Nevertheless, neo-soul music and identity self-consciously draw on influences from the stereotypically nonblack camps of rock, electronica, and folk music. (699 M. David) Neo-soul certainly communicates with this sort of post-black/post-soul impulse; its rejection of categorization and its playful crossing of ideological borders support this basic proposition. Still, no matter how much neo-soul participates in the New Black Aesthetic, the former differs from the latter in that it does not eschew black/African diaspora positivity and does not seek to parody black nationalism, but rather it reflects on both for the advancement of a progressive sociopolitical agenda. (699 M. David)

In conclusion the Origin of Neo-Soul music is no doubt rooted by soul. The influences are no doubt heard through neo-soul music and from articles that support the idea of its origin. Although many people don't support the term, there are few that see the direction of why the genre was labeled this way. Most of the rejection of neo-soul is based on these artists' belief that their music cannot—or at least should not be labeled that way and that Soul, R&B music has never gone away and can never be replaced. I do agree with both notations and see the arguments made. I have always enjoyed neo-soul music and hope the genre continues to grow.

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